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ABSTRACT

Noting that the concept of convention as a rule procedure in a formal analysis of interpersonal communication applies to the mass communication practice known as the "convention" or annual professional meeting of an academic discipline, this paper illustrates the ideological consequence of this eidetic connection. The paper characterizes the types of discourse that make up the convention occurring at such a meeting, and--agreeing that this "convention of conventions" assures a reasonable amount of unreflected orderly discourse--argues that it also systematically distorts experience in favor of certain kinds of ideas and activities over others. The paper then critically deconstructs the ideological commitments of speech communication conventions (meetings) and looks at the particular type of experiences these commitments self-select. Finally, the paper discusses a more appropriate ideological basis for professional meetings as a form for mass communication. (HTH)

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THE CONVENTION OF 'CONVENTIONS': A PHENOMENOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE IDEOLOGY OF PROFESSIONAL MASS COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

THE CONVENTION OF 'CONVENTIONS': A PHENOMENOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE IDEOLOGY OF PROFESSIONAL MASS COMMUNICATION

The concept of convention as a rule procedure in a formal analysis of interpersonal communication applies to the mass communication practice known as the 'convention' or annual professional meeting of an academic discipline. The ideological consequence of this eidetic connection is empirically illustrated by a comparison of the 'convention' with the historical, cultural practice of the symposium/conference/congress structure as a cultural form of mass communication.

Communication both as a concept and as practiced is arbitrary and conventional. Communication is arbitrary at the personal and social level because the currently used concepts and behavior displays could be different. While concept and behavior are not individually determined, they do arise through some personal choice process. Concept and behavior are conventional because they are commonly understood and preserved in society with sufficient uniformity to be available to the next generation as theory and praxis. This uniformity is precisely what Znaniecki (1969: 137) calls the "humanistic coefficient." Precisely because of this arbitrary and conventional nature, communication both as a concept and behavior is inherently ideological. Both the idea and action develop at a particular point in time, in a particular culture, and within particular theories and are retained to the exclusion of potential competing concepts and behaviors. Both the concept and behavior interconnect with beliefs and values that make up our particular social melieu. The particular ideological commitments implied in our everyday action and interaction are usually taken for granted as the standard background practices from which we constitute our engagements with other people. To follow Karl Mannheim, the term "ideology" is the most appropriate for describing this constituted communication background (Brown 1978: 16). As he indicates: "There is implicit in the word 'ideology' the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real conditions of the society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilizes it."

Speech communication conventions, while being special contexts for mass communication, are like everyday interaction in their conventionality and implied ideological commitments. This conventionality, like that of everyday life, assures a reasonable amount of unreflected orderly discourse but systemati-

cally distorts experience in favor of certain kinds of ideas and activities over others (Johnson et al. 1982). In this paper I wish to characterize the type of discourse as the convention that takes place at a "convention [meeting]." In other words, my analysis seeks to display the conventionality of convention discourse. In so doing, I critically deconstruct the ideological commitments of speech communication conventions [meetings] and look at the particular type of experiences these commitments self-select for the participants. Last, I discuss a more appropriate ideological basis for professional meetings as a critical form for mass communication, i.e., the "mass" critically considered as the "communicative community" which it is (Apel 1981). In order to get to that place, I wish to start by discussing ideology, conventionality, and conventions.

Ideology and Conventionality

In a general sense, ideology is a systematic body of concepts arising within culture which describe or explain culture or, more particularly, human life. In the particular sense in which I am interested, ideology is a set of behavioral practices which are reflexively used to describe or explain themselves (O'Sullivan et al. 1983: 107; see Ritter 1979). As Habermas (1979) explains, "In filling out the double structure of speech, participants in dialogue communicate on two levels simultaneously. They combine communication of a content with communication about a role in which the communicated content is used (p. 42)." Note that Habermas is not describing the relation between a metalanguage and an object-language (Lyons 1977). Rather his concern is for the creative or productive element in communication that is performance. When a

person communicates with another person, there is a performance such that the act of saying something both says something and produces the context (audience, situation) in which it can be said. The double structure of action and conception is based on, but conceals, ideological commitments. Ideology represents the unexplicated normative behavior of individuals whose communication is constituting their society as a culture. Or, to be particular to our immediate concerns, a person who reads papers at a professional meeting helps to constitute a select society whose values include being learned. A less anxiety provoking example is the rhetoric of town meetings (Potter 1957).

In an unsophisticated sense, convention is thought of as a rule of conduct. As an historical criterion, in the study of convention, a distinction is made between conduct that is (1) constituted and/or (2) regulated by rules (Lanigan 1977). But in understanding conventions, this constitutive/regulative distinction falls victim to the same type of analysis that Habermas warns against in the object-language/metalanguage distinction. More accurately, personal behavior becomes a social performance (by constitutive rules) that is simultaneously controlled by cultural expectations (in regulative rules). Thus, the focal concern is once again the double structure of communication. I shall use the term conventionality to refer to an adherence to rules of conduct by participants.

Conventionality displays a double structure inasmuch as any communication that occurs simultaneously confirms its legitimate value by comparison to past behaviors of a similar nature and function (Veron 1971). Hence, a precedent is confirmed. "Indeed, precedent is merely the source of one important kind of salience: conspicuous uniqueness of an equilibrium because we reached it last time" (Lewis 1969: 36). To put it more simply, a state of conventionality

occurs where and when a regularity in performances is manifest. Such a regularity is the creative or productive process that links the individual act (constitutive rules) to the social, i.e., intersubjective, conception (regulative rules).

Having laid out the grounds for understanding ideology and conventionality, I can now turn to conventional ideologies. This is to say, I can expose the salient features of the annual professional conference commonly known as the 'convention.' To a certain extent, my goal is to demythologize the communicative behaviors that are produced and consumed as the process of creating meaning between speech communication professionals in such ecosystems as the annual (or better yet, the international fifth year) meeting of the International Communication Association.

Since our own conventions [meetings] are generally assumed rather than made explicit, it should be useful to spend a moment comparing some alternative ecosystems (Wilden 1980), principally to be found in the history of European practice. Alternative models are important since they display ideological conventionality which offers some context for looking at conventions by negative definition (Foucault 1972). That is, we may find out what we do and why, by looking at what could be done and the reasons for it. To be specific, let us compare professional gatherings that are variously called a symposium, a conference, and a congress (see Fig. 1).

In developing a sense of ideological conventionality, I begin with the symposium and culminate with the congress for reasons which become apparent. Since I am dealing with an ideological conventionality, I am in the peculiar position of attempting to describe what we do by doing it, a sort of performing performance (Peterson 1980). However, for the conceptually oriented in our eco-

INSTITUTION	PERSPECTIVE	DEGREE	RESEARCH REPORTING [1 to 9 hierarchy; A to B causality]					
			A. WRITING FORMS			B. SPEAKING FORMS		
			Topics	Issues	Relationships	Topics	Issues	Relationships
Scholarship [researcher]	Personal	B.A. B.S.	Abstract 1-A	Precis 4-A	Prospectus 7-A	Recitation 1-B	Course 4-B	Symposium 7-B
Profession	Communal	M.A. M.S.	Research Report 2-A	Theses 5-A	Dissertation 8-A	Tutorial 2-B	Seminar 5-B	Conference 8-B
Discipline	Social	Ph.D. D. Sc.	Article 3-A	Monograph 6-A	Book 9-A	Lecture 3-B	Proseminar 6-B	Congress 9-B

Fig. 1 The structure of research reporting. The structure is followed closely by European scholars, largely because of the paradigmatic organization of the University of Paris in the 13th and 14th Centuries and the great advance made under this structure by the German universities in the 19th Century. The structure is relatively unknown to American (USA) scholars and seldom followed with any understanding of its intent.

system, I refer you to the O.E.D. for documentation of the relevant terms. A symposium is a specially called meeting for the purpose of discussing a common subject. In particular, it is a meeting organized around a special topic which attempts to locate some common ground among diverse participants. In short, the symposium is a problem centered gathering, rather than the product of a special interest group as typically found within a discipline. If you like, a symposium is usually an attempt to get conflicting interests resolved for the common good. As a frequent practice, the symposium is as much a social as professional event, often facilitated by the abundant drinking of special beverages--if you remember your Platonic dialogues. In the typical convention, drinks tend to signal the switch from problem to social centered talk. The conventional success model follows the practice of the "businessman's cocktail" where making contacts for some future discussion is facilitated by the drink rather than an enhancement of the present experience.[1]

A conference is a more formal version of the symposium. It is still a problem centered meeting, but one cast within the limits of a given discipline. The basic idea of a conference is consultation and discussion by people who have a special interest in formulating the boundaries of a particular problematic. Once the problem has been stated, work on a solution can begin. One possible approach to the conference is a dialectic one. In this model the attempt is to put aside the particular characteristics of the participants in an effort to reach a common understanding. Thus, the problem can be stated in such a manner that a solution can be found or at least criteria for solution can be stated. The hope is that a group can reason through reality to reach some certainty as to which solution is correct. In the convention [meeting] (as opposed to the

symposium or conference) the discussion is primarily rhetorical, rather than dialectical (Rosenfield et al. 1976: 234-238). At conventions [meetings], solution upon solution is offered for an ill-stated and often obscured or forgotten problem. The speaker's presence, academic credentials, past research, and research design are marshalled together to make a case for the acceptance of one of the solutions. Both the content and process differ in a dialectic process aimed at understanding (in symposia and conferences) and a rhetorical one aimed at agreement (in conventions [meetings]). Ideology is clear in this differientation (Habermas 1984).

Last a "congress" is a formal assembly of specialists to settle some outstanding question. Congresses are not annual affairs, they are frequently held in four year cycles so that breakthroughs in special disciplines can be announced. The main purpose of the congress is to detail the manner in which the specific solution can be applied to concrete, secondary problems. Europeans who attend congresses expect to come away with new technical information that will enable them to finally resolve practical problems. While the popular press occasionally prints findings reported at the last 'convention' [meeting], it is rarely a conclusion or breakthrough. Usually it is an isolated study using a method or making an unusual statement about an old subject which the reporter found interesting or at least thought the reader or listening audience would. Rather than blame the reporter, it would appear that the reporter is true to conventionality behavior.

To sum up, our models of the symposium, the conference, and the congress differ from the 'convention' [meeting] in that the participants in these three types of meetings are interested in producing concrete experience while

'convention' [meeting] goers are interested in consuming it. A 'convention' [meeting] is an association, a meeting place of people rather than ideas and it is the interaction of people, not ideas, that stand out as interesting. The association is with "famous" people with the hope that there is magic in knowing them by name, rather than an encounter with great ideas where we first remember what was said and then who said it.

All this is not to suggest that next year there should be a "Congress." I only wish to make clearer what a convention [meeting] is by contrasting it with other models of professional meetings. We chose to have conventions for practical-social-cultural-historical reasons. Those who attended the first (and as yet only) ICA World Congress on Communication Science in Berlin might recall reporters waiting outside for a session to end. At the conclusion, they would ask a panelist what had been concluded. When the American panelist answered that there had been papers on this topic and that topic, neither the panelist nor the reporter had any idea of what to say next. What I am saying is that the choice of a meeting format is an ideological one (see Fig. 1). Now, let me turn to the nature of these ideological commitments.

By negative dialectic, the conventional ideology of the American 'convention' [meeting] is precisely convention as an ideology. What is the 'convention' as an ideology? By a fortunate turn of thinking, the answer is provided in the very context of performing performance, i.e., in this case the researching of research.

> Beyond its social and ritualistic functions, the annual convention is important both to the organization which sponsors it and to the members who attend. Ideally, the annual convention provides

> a rhetorical situation in which the needs of individual members and the needs of the organization meet on common ground. For an organization, the convention offers a mechanism for conducting its business, an opportunity for increasing its membership, and an index of its vitality and strength. For individual members, the convention affords a chance to present their views, enhance their professional expertise, and maintain friendships with colleagues of similar interests (Larson and Hensley 1978: 206).

Thus, Larson and Hensley characterize systematically the values present in their study of the Central State Speech Association Convention held in Detroit in April of 1977. The 'convention' [meeting] as a communication event suggests the typicality of conventionality. That is, we find adherence to rules of conduct: "Ideally, the annual convention provides a rhetorical situation in which the needs of individual members and the needs of the organization meet on common ground." In turn, the typicality of ideology is displayed: "For an organization the convention offers a mechanism for conducting its business,. . ." and "For individual members the convention affords a chance to present their views, . . ."

At this point, the relationship among communication, ideology, and conventionality is fairly explicit as it occurs in the annual convention [meeting]. In this relationship, we have a coherent picture of mass communication as the individual and organizational actions that become the manifest conceptions in such a professional gathering. My concern now is to explore the extension of ideology and conventionality beyond the convention event to the "discipline" of speech communication itself. While it might appear at least epigramatic to

speak of this extension as the "spread of conventional wisdom", I shall reserve the term conventionalism for this mass communication function (Apel's Verstandigung).

Conventionalism as Ideology and Conventionality

The use of the term conventionalism is as historically problematic as it is practical to my present explication. The concept is historically "reserved for an attitude to the methodology of natural science" (Kolakowski 1968: 158). Nonetheless, the same attitude makes its appearance in the human sciences as well. And it is this human science view that interests me. In particular, I am concerned with the method by which ideology and conventionality at a professional convention form the communication values in the discipline generally. As might be anticipated, one major reason for this line of analysis is the circular and cumulative nature of professional behavior that leads back to the annual convention [meeting].

Our discussion of conventionalism is easier if we examine the standard view in the natural sciences and then translate it into the human science view. In this transformation please recall that I am discussing the attitude (ideology) contained in methodology (conventionality).

> The fundamental idea of conventionalism may be stated as follows: certain scientific propositions, erroneously taken for descriptions of the world based on the recording and generalization of experiments, are in fact artificial creations, and we regard them as true not because we are compelled to do so for empirical reasons, but because they are convenient, useful, or even because they

have aesthetic appeal. Conventionalists agree with empiricism on the origin of knowledge but reject empiricism as a norm that allows us to justify all accepted judgments by appealing to experience, conceived of as a sufficient criterion of their truth. Or, to put the same point somewhat more accurately, the data of experience always leave scope for more than one explanatory hypothesis, and which one is to be chosen can not be determined by experience. Rival hypotheses accounting for a given aggregate of facts may be equally sound from a logical point of view, and hence our actual choices are accounted for by eidetic (non-empirical) considerations (Kolakowski 1968: 158-159; see Berstein 1978-79).

The most efficient way to translate this natural science attitude and method into the communicative view of ideology and conventionality as a human science is to briefly cite the theory construction work by Lewis (1969). He offers the following definition (of what I am calling conventionalism) which he confirms analytically using a standard propositional calculus:

> A regularity R in the behavior of members of a population P when they are the agents in a recurrent situation S is a convention if and only if it is true that, and it is common knowledge in P that, in almost any instance of S among members of P,
>
> (1) almost everyone conforms to R;
>
> (2) almost everyone expects almost everyone else to conform to R;
>
> (3) almost everyone has approximately the same preferences regarding all possible combinations of actions;
>
> (4) almost everyone prefers that any one more conform to R, on

condition that almost everyone conform to R;

(5) almost everyone would prefer that any one more conform to R', on condition that almost everyone conform to R', where R' is some possible regularity in the behavior of members of P in S, such that almost no one in almost any instance of S among members of P could conform both to R' and to R (p. 78).

This rather formal explanation of conventionalism should become clear as we look at the five conditions enumerated in the definition. In particular, we can take these conditions and exemplify them in a progressive movement from the phenomenological description of conventionalism as (1) a social form, (2) to the phenomenological reduction of that disciplinary description, and (3) to phenomenological interpretation of the annual convention meeting as a fundamental structure of discourse.

Conventionalism as a Social Form. I have already discussed the cultural differences between models of the symposium, conference and congress as opposed to the convention [meeting]. In all cases, however, there is a common element and that is for Lewis "a regularity R in the behavior of members of a population P when they are agents in a recurrent situation S . . . ." The necessary and sufficient conditions that constitute the professional meetings under their various methods of problem stating or solving is that "(1) almost everyone conforms to R" and that "(2) almost everyone expects almost everyone else to conform to R."

I can illustrate as a phenomenological description these two conditions of conventionalism by recalling that attendance at an American convention is preeminently a social and ritualistic activity. Attendance calls for a certain

style of behavior. Styles are considered here as "idioms of knowledge and communication. They suffice for communication in so far and for so long as they are understood by convention (samketa); elsewhere or at another time, they must be learnt before the art can be deciphered. . . ." (Coomarasway 1934/1956: 85). Compare, for example, the dress, hotel selection, and climate of Speech Communication Association conventions as compared to those of the International Communication Association. Compare the technical specialists in the discipline whose style of professionalism are radically different (e.g., the rhetorical critic and behavioral scientist), yet are at least social equals in one discipline. In symposium form, the annual convention creates a common ground for communication and other social behavior. The specialists are of the same social form; they conform and expect conformity.

In conference form, the annual convention [meeting] is a rhetorical situation giving the specialist circle a common ground. You must be a technical specialist in this group in order to confer. You must have a specific style of adhering to the subject matter and the people who discuss it. At the annual convention [meeting], the boundaries of style are present as the various divisions of the professional association. Of course, each division has several programs that take the style to the level of the congressional form. Specialists attack a very specific problem, often so that they can become even more methodologically specialized at attacking the problem, rather than solving it in a concrete, applied manner. If we can use the social systems metaphor, the annual convention represents a method of creating meaning in organisms who are themselves constituted by cells (programs), organs (divisions), and systems (regional and national professional associations).

Conventionalism as Disciplinary. The annual convention also establishes and maintains a certain control over both people and subject matter. That is the nature and function of a discipline. As a phenomenological reduction in terms of the Lewis model, the third and fourth necessary and sufficient conditions are met. That is, "(3) almost everyone has approximately the same preferences regarding all possible combinations of actions" and "(4) almost everyone prefers that any one more conform to R, on condition that almost everyone conform to R." Or as we previously noted in the Larson and Hensley (1978) version: "For an organization, the convention offers a mechanism for conducting its business, an opportunity for increasing its membership, and an index of its vitality and strength" (p. 206). A quick mental review of the membership categories in our professional associations, the procedures for holding administrative positions in the association, and the history of the connection between these and annual conventions, gives you a clearer picture of disciplinary conventionality.

What is often less clear is the ideological commitment to consumerism (Lanigan 1981). You begin by purchasing your membership, and, frequently that is done as a prerequisite of getting into the annual convention. And then there is good value for money spent by attending the convention. As Larson and Hensley naively suggest in their study, attendance is not random, yet is representative of those ". . . persons whose professional interests and/or financial resources warranted their attendance at Detroit. Thus, while the convention goers may not have been a random sample representative of all CSSA members, it is likely that they did represent a sample of the most professional, interested and active persons in the organization." Of course this includes those seeking

employment or different employment, recruitment of graduate students, status reports of departments and persons, and the selling of T-shirts and textbooks. How different this is from a scholarly society whose membership is by invitation or nomination on the basis of research accomplishment and whose conferences are not conventions [meetings] arranged on the fraternal model of the "Elks", the "Lions", or the "Rotary Club" in American (USA) society.

Conventionalism as Recurrent Structure. There is in the annual convention an opportunity to grow and change. The convention is an open system. Yet, it is a system with very specific change conditions that are nicely stated in Lewis' fifth condition for conventionalism as a phenomenological interpretation. That is, "(5) almost everyone would prefer that any one more conform to R', on condition that almost everyone conform to R', where R' is some possible regularity in the behavior of members of P in S, such that almost no one in almost any instance of S among members of P could conform both to R' and to R." In more familiar language, Lewis explains formally that if one person is going to do something unexpected, it is permissible if we would all prefer that change to our usual practice. This is the ideology of the buzz-word and the "latest" research fad in the "mainstream."

The best illustration of conventionalism as a recurrent structure is the process of making presentations at conventions. Let us suppose you are responsible for chairing a program panel. Such a program is R'; it is a new situation that must have all the structural features of R (the usual program), to be acceptable to the membership (P) at the annual convention (S). Typically there is no problem in mounting such a program because the new subject matter is plugged into the old structure. The R to R' shift represents more consumption

of a familiar product. We experience the same old format with the same old faces. We come to hear Person X do his thing again and we judge this year's performance. The competitive selection process, even more clearly than the "old boys's club," assures that the free market place of ideas will be filled with "new improved" varieties of name brand products. This type of conventionalism enforces a kind of procedural sublimation where having done something in the right way is seen as an adequate substitute for having done something right.

By way of summarizing conventionalism as ideology and conventionality, three distinct empirical relationships emerge under phenomenological analysis. These relationships prescribe the ideological constituents of conventionalism as an ideology of mass communication. First, there must be regularity in behavior. Convention [meeting] participants do the same thing in the same way. Those who do not are devalued by banishment to the non-divisional program. Second, there must be a recurrent population. Those who do not attend regularly are rarely elected to office or appear on a panel. Third, there must be a recurrent situation. Basically this situation is the annual gathering, but more specifically, it is the traditional assignment of three panels to this division and four to that one and so on. If you can not find a division you like, you must look for another association to join. Given these ideological conditions, how do we go about legitimizing our continued involvement in the conventionalism? After all, there is a presumption that our activities can be personally and professionally justified.

Reflected and Unreflected Ideologies

Whether or not we can justify an ideological claim is the precise nature of

the contemporary idea of legitimation. That is, conventionality leads to the establishment of an ideology and conversely. In either case, the conjunction of an action and a conception are united as a normative condition or value. The manner in which the union occurs is its justification. As a usual practice, it is possible to distinguish justifications as either reflected or unreflected. Recall that I cited this difference in the very beginning of the paper with Habermas' comment that communication contains the double structure of combining content and function in one action. Yet, such a communication act may be reflective in that I am aware of the manner in which I am joining content to function. Or, the act remains unreflected if it is merely functional and/or substantive because I am unaware of the method of my manner. Or to put the issue in Hjelmslevian (1969) terms, the communicative action is reflective if it is a <u>function</u>, whereas it is unreflective if it is a <u>functive</u>.

In their discussion of "special audiences," Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971) point out that the unreflected conventionality and its ideological consequences exist because ". . . there are agreements that are peculiar to the members of a particular discipline, whether it be of scientific or technical, juridical or theological nature. Such agreements constitute the body of a science or technique. They may be the result of certain conventions of adherence to certain texts, and they characterize certain audiences" (p. 99). In particular, such audiences use a technical language that displays "an aggregate of acquired knowledge, rules, and conventions."

The only point at which participation in the discipline is a reflective process is when a person initially joins the profession. He or she must literally learn by reflection how to profess the discipline. Perelman (1971)

provides an excellent illustration.

> Entry into a specialized group requires initiation. While a speaker must normally adapt himself to his audience, this is not true of a teacher responsible for teaching students what is accepted by the particular group they wish to join. In this case, persuasion is preliminary to initiation. It must secure submission to the requirements of the specialized group, for which the teacher is the spokesman. Initiation into a given discipline consists of communicating its rules, techniques, specific ideas, and presuppositions, as well as method of criticizing its results in terms of the disciplines own requirements (pp. 99-100).

Hence, the annual convention becomes a testing ground for candidates wishing initiation into the discipline. Even at the convention stage, we can distinguish the reflective and unreflective legitimation process at work. Those graduate students still caught up in the reflective process are the tag-on coauthors of papers bearing the names of high profile conventionalists. The so-called successful initiates, those who are part of the standard unreflective process, are present to deliver their solo papers on special "debut" programs.

In the process, I am describing there is a legitimation crisis. A symbolic relation is created whereby criticism is transformed into commentary and the explicit values offer not justification, but neutrality (Foucault 1972). As Perelman (1971: 335) suggests, "speech acts on what it states." Commentary is the unreflective process of <u>testing</u> the <u>regulation</u> of members of a population when they are agents in a recurrent situation (the Lewis Model). Here, commentary is the unreflected process of evaluation--literally to fix or determine the

value of the speech communication within the boundaries of the technical language and action of the discipline. By comparison, criticism is the reflective process of analyzing the constitution of behavior of the members of a population when they are agents in a recurrent situation (see Grossberg 1978). In the normal course of events at an annual convention, we witness critique turn into commentary as the initiate turns professional. And, we see criticism subverted into commentary as conventionalism assures that only accepted methods will be used to explore new subject matters; indeed, speech acts on what it states. Normal science in Kuhn's sense reigns supreme, or at least governs such an ideology as dominant.

What is apparent in the dialectic between commentary and criticism is the value neutrality of conventionalism. There is an absence of any system of justification inherent in the subject matter of the discipline. Hence, justification is abstracted from the behavior of the people in the discipline. The resulting legitimation process is a crisis state because the annual convention [meeting] legitimizes the professional, not the profession. The scholar as famous name is valued rather than the discourse of creative research. The growing use of so-called "blind reviewers" in the selection and publication of research products is at the very least a recognition, if not a confirmation (because it is just "so-called"), of this legitimation crisis. Nor do we need to explore the fact that the re-viewer must be blind in order to see in an ideologically correct way.

Reconstructive Legitimation

Habermas (1979: 204) does suggest a theoretical solution to a legitimation

crisis like the one we are concerned with in conventionalism. He argues for a program of "reconstructive legitimation". "The reconstruction of given legitimations can consist, first, in discovering the justificatory system, S, that allows for evaluating the given legitimations as valid or invalid in S." In other words, we need to discover in a systematic way exactly why we have an annual convention [meeting] as a profession (see Beale 1978). I have examined the many personal reasons that offered justification for participation in the discipline, but there is no system of values that points to the inherent existence of a discipline. Given this situation, a "justificatory system" should be created. There are at least signs that this is happening: The creation of workshops and seminars preceding conventions, doctoral honors seminars in isolation from conventions, and special conferences that are problem specific (Bitzer and Black 1971; Miller and Simons 1974). The bottom line is that professional associations must adopt the "justificatory system" that is typical of learned societies. The legitimation of the discipline should develop from the profession in the professional, not from the personalities at the party convention [meeting].

The need for an effort at reconstructive legitimation is familiar and obvious when set in the concrete world of convention goers and doers. In the publish or perish atmosphere of institutionalized, corporate academia, the annual convention should be a recognized and positively valued mark of professional contribution. It should provide valuable critique for research, rather than the present tendency to offer commentary by lack of mention in this year's convention directory. The annual convention [meeting] should be a practical context for judging a scholar's readiness to be promoted and not a "market" for

advertising the latest "products" of the scholar. The annual convention [meeting] should consistently address itself to the concrete social responsibility the discipline has to itself and the general public. The convention should motivate public praise and criticism rather than foster private cynicism. In this context, the convention [meeting] should be a testing ground to expose the rampant ideological neutrality that sustains the failure of social commitment and lack of political involvement. The fantasies of the ivory tower to the contrary, our discipline of Speech Communication is in the middle of the contemporary social and political arena and we must take responsibility for it. It will no longer do to make research claims and simultaneously deny responsibility for their social importance. As a discipline functioning within the institution of education, we are part of the reflective process. We can not pretend to unreflected neutrality by hiding our objective world in a technical language (Perelman 1971: 212). "In contrasting the natural and the human sciences, or quantitative with qualitative knowledge, we construct a classification of kinds of knowledge based essentially on the idea we form of their greater or smaller independence by reference to the social conditions in which they have developed" (Perelman 1963: 154; see Ray 1978). Speech Communication is by definition the human reflection that separates the process of human life from the events of nature. We are engaged in and by that reflection in an on-going dialectic. The reflection is an ideology that we perform by conventionality. In the end we can not escape the critical demand for phenomenological justification: To communicate is to be responsible.

NOTE

1. An interesting illustration is the dilemma of the City Council in Carbondale, Illinois that voted to change the name of its proposed "convention center" to "conference center" since the facility was not intended for large, national groups who would require extensive hotel, drinking, and eating accommodations. However, the "conference center" was duly re-renamed the "convention center" when it was discovered that federal tax legislation does not permit the public funding of anything except a "convention center" (Tax Rule, 1984).

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